



2010 SUMMIT ON HEALTH, NUTRITION AND OBESITY: ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC IN CALIFORNIA

California's obesity epidemic poses a significant public health and economic threat to the state. In California, approximately one in 9 children, one in three teens, and three in five adults are overweight or obese. Although recent trends suggest leveling growth rates of obesity in the state, overall obesity rates remain disconcertingly high. In the last decade alone, adult obesity rates have increased by nearly 10 percent and have more than doubled since 1990.

Obesity is especially concerning for low-income Californians and communities of color. Low-income families are more likely to be overweight or obese compared to higher income families, low-income teenagers are three times more obese than their wealthier peers, and more than 30 percent of low-income children are overweight. 40 percent of the state's medically obese adult population is of Hispanic origin, and the four largest groups at risk for childhood obesity – Pacific Islanders, Latinos, American Indians and African Americans – are all minority communities.

As one of the leading causes of preventable death, obesity is significantly associated with increased rates of chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. Three million California adults have diabetes, and nearly one in four have been diagnosed with high blood pressure. As a result of the obesity epidemic, doctors are seeing an alarming rise in chronic illness in children with childhood chronic disease rates quadrupling over the past four decades. Obese children are more than twice as likely to have type-2 diabetes as children of normal weight, and researchers now estimate that more than 30 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls born in California in the year 2000 will be diagnosed with diabetes during their lifetime.

Leading to increased health care costs and diminished worker productivity, obesity is a costly epidemic. According to the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, the annual economic costs associated with obesity, overweight, and physical inactivity in the state doubled in only six years, from \$22 billion in 2000 to \$41 billion in 2006. Estimates project those costs to increase to \$53 billion by 2011. A recent study estimated that by 2023 Californians will have more than four million avoidable chronic diseases that will cost nearly \$19 billion to treat and result in nearly \$100 billion in lost productivity.